

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support "The Veterans Health-Care Items Procurement Reform and Improvement Act of 2002," and seek its quick approval by Congress on behalf of our nation's veterans and taxpayers.

GIRL SCOUT GOLD MEDAL  
RECIPIENT: AYLSSA WESCOTT

**HON. STEVE ISRAEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 29, 2002*

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize one of New York's outstanding young students: Alyssa Wescott. In February, the young women of her troop will honor her by bestowing upon her the Girl Scouts Gold Medal.

Since the beginning of this century, the Girls Scouts of America have provided thousands of youngsters each year the opportunity to make friends, explore new ideas, and develop leadership skills while learning self-reliance and teamwork.

These awards are presented only to those who possess the qualities that make our nation great: commitment to excellence, hard work, and genuine love of community service. The Gold Awards represent the highest awards attainable by junior and high school Girl Scouts.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the recipient of this award, as her activities are indeed worthy of praise. Their leadership benefits our community and they serve as role models for their peers.

Also, we must not forget the unsung heroes, who continue to devote a large part of their lives to make all this possible. Therefore, I salute the families, scout leaders, and countless others who have given generously of their time and energy in support of scouting.

It is with great pride that I recognize the achievements of Alyssa, and bring the attention of Congress to this successful young woman on her day of recognition.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**HON. HENRY J. HYDE**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 29, 2002*

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, last year marked the 225th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, arguably one of the most important documents ever written. The National Lawyers Association Foundation has honored this anniversary by producing educational materials for elementary school students, a project that I believe is worthy of recognition. I therefore submit the following for your review:

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ON THE LEGAL AND  
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECLARATION  
OF INDEPENDENCE

In 2001, our nation celebrated its 225th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. By signing this document the Founding Fathers pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the causes set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

In order to help American children appreciate and understand the significance of the Declaration of Independence, the National Lawyers Association Foundation, a not-for-profit group has developed an educational program for third, fourth, and fifth graders. This program consists of an entertaining 6-minute video that helps them understand the clear, ringing language in the Declaration. The video introduces students to the concept of the self-evident truths, that all persons "... are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness—that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from consent of the governed."

The video helps teachers explain why the Declaration of Independence was written to explain why we sought our freedom from England, that unalienable rights are rights that cannot be taken away from us; and that self-evident truths are principles that will always be true; for example, that all people are created equal.

A lesson plan accompanies that video and encourages the students to think about a situation that they feel is unfair and write their own Declaration of Independence to understand concepts regarding what rights they feel entitled to, why they feel they deserve these rights, and compare them to what the feelings of our Forefathers must have been when they wrote the Declaration of Independence. Students are also encouraged to display knowledge of when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

The National Lawyers Association Foundation is making the video, lesson plan, as well as replicas of copies of the Declaration of Independence requested by elementary school teachers in school classes, public and private, available at no charge, as long as funds are available. The video and lesson plan is also available to any interested individuals or organizations such as home schoolers, lawyers, bar associations and public service groups who desire to use the video and lesson plan for a nominal fee. Replicas of the Declaration of Independence are also available to the public for a nominal fee as long as funds are available.

The National Lawyers Association Foundation also plans to continue the project to make videos and books regarding the Declaration of Independence available to students in the upper grades, as well as making available to all citizens, copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The National Lawyers Association Foundation has been told over 65,000 students across America have benefited from the materials provided by their volunteer efforts. The National Lawyers Association Foundation serves a need of the American public and the world to appreciate how the Founding Fathers of this nation created and established that there are no classes of people in America and all people are endowed with the same unalienable rights by their Creator.

The language in the Declaration of Independence has been quoted and spoken about by many of our American presidents and also needs to be in the hearts and in the vocabulary of our American citizens. The National Lawyers Association Foundation is working to make the words of the Declaration of Independence valued by all Americans and help serve the need for the principles of the Declaration of Independence to be spoken and honored, not only to America, but to the world at large.

URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF  
UKRAINE TO ENSURE A DEMOCRATIC,  
TRANSPARENT, AND  
FAIR ELECTION PROCESS LEADING  
UP TO THE MARCH 31, 2002,  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

**HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 29, 2002*

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution, which urges the Government of Ukraine to ensure a democratic, transparent, and fair election process leading up to the March 31, 2002, parliamentary elections.

I would first like to thank my colleague, Louise Slaughter, for her hard work in initializing the development of this important resolution. I am appreciative of her leadership on issues relating to Ukraine, and I am pleased to have worked so closely with her in crafting this legislation. I would also like to thank my House International Relations Committee colleagues, Elton Gallegly and Chris Smith, for their contributions to this resolution, and to acknowledge their commitment to a meaningful democratization process in Ukraine.

The importance of Ukraine's March 31, 2002 parliamentary elections—the third parliamentary elections since gaining independence over ten years ago—should not be underestimated.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine has worked to achieve a more western, democratic approach in its governance, and the upcoming elections mark an historical crossroads for a country undergoing dramatic democratic transformation. Significant challenges remain—restrictions on basic democratic freedoms are alarming; its nuclear plants are in need of clean-up; the media suffers from blatant harassment and government corruption runs rampant.

Ukraine has also come a long way in just a decade. Its economy grew more than six percent last year. It not only voluntarily gave up the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, but has also consistently, with the U.S. assistance, sought to eliminate its stockpile of strategic missiles. Basic political reforms have begun in earnest.

The resolution we have introduced today acknowledges the democratic reforms that Ukraine has achieved, but it also sheds light on the vast improvements Ukraine must make in order to become a full-fledged democracy. The resolution encourages the Government of Ukraine to implement basic tools in order to ensure free and fair elections including a transparency of election procedures, access for international election observers, multiparty representation on election commissions and equal access to the media for all election candidates.

Now more than ever, as Ukraine strives to realize a more robust democracy, it needs the encouragement of the United States as well as its scrutiny. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution when it comes before them on the House floor.